

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR KERR

RE: ITEMS UPDATING PHILIPPINE EVENTS

- VER MAY RETIRE BY 21 DEC
- AFP J-3 MAY BE FORCIBLY RETIRED
- MARCOS MAY PICK FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER TOLENTINO AS RUNNING-MATE

Marcos

Date 12/10

The Philippines: Recent Election Developments

Campaigning is beginning for the 7 February presidential election. Potential candidates for president and vice president must file their bids by Wednesday.

- The ruling KBL party meets tomorrow to name Marcos its presidential standardbearer--but the vice presidential position can be left vacant until 21 December, when each party must nominate its complete ticket.
- There is no clear sign that Marcos has settled on a running mate yet, but his closest advisers--including Imelda Marcos--clearly want him to avoid selecting a bona fide successor. Press speculation is that vice presidential bids will be filed by Labor Minister Ople, Prime Minister Virata, Minister of Local Government Rono, former Foreign Minister Tolentino, and industrialist Eduardo Cojuangco, among others, giving Marcos a large number of potential running mates.

The moderate opposition, meanwhile, has been unable to forge a unified ticket. Last-minute squabbling between Corazon Aquino and Salvador Laurel scuttled last Sunday's planned announcement of a joint ticket headed by Aquino.

- Plans for the ticket under a coalition UNIDO-Laban party came unglued when Laurel insisted that the joint ticket run under his UNIDO party.
- Although efforts to reconcile the two opposition camps continue, Laurel announced yesterday that he was filing a bid for president as UNIDO's candidate. Meanwhile, vice presidential bids have been filed by Liberal Party leader Jovito Salonga and PDP-LABAN politicians Nene Pimentel and Ramon Mitra.
- If Aquino's campaign snowballs--and Laurel's supporters bolt UNIDO, as some are threatening to do--Laurel could become irrelevant to the campaign.

The US bases are unlikely to be a major issue in the campaign, but the candidates continue to play the matter for the US audience.

- Aquino's recent statements that she would respect the existing bilateral bases agreement and could not predict what position she might take in future negotiations reveals a new degree of flexibility, according to our Embassy. Last year, Aquino joined nine leading opposition politicians in a platform that "foreign military bases on Philippine territory must be removed.
- Laurel refused to sign the opposition platform, arguing instead that the bases issue should be resolved through a national plebiscite to be held in 1991. Recent public opinion polls indicate overwhelming support for continuation of the bases.
- Statements by Marcos to the effect that he would extend the Agreement past its scheduled expiration date in 1991 are intended to quiet critics here.

Meanwhile, following General Ver's reinstatement as Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Marcos has announced a major reorganization of the armed forces accompanied by new personnel assignments.

- At least 50 senior officers, including many extended on duty beyond retirement age, could be retired by next April.
- Recent shifts in senior Navy personnel, however, suggest that newly appointed officers will be Ver loyalists.
- It is still possible that Marcos will soon replace Ver, who is likely to continue to run military affairs as director of intelligence.

Page Denied

Next 8 Page(s) In Document Denied